1859MNRAS..19..229S

Biela's Comet.

In No. 120 of Gould's *Astronomical Journal* Professor Hubbard has determined the elements of the two nuclei of this comet for the perihelion passage of the present year, and has computed an ephemeris of their positions for every fourth day, extending from 1859, March 23, to July 21. Mr. Hind, as Superintendent of the *Nautical Almanac,* has published an extension of this ephemeris, giving the places for every day from April 20 to July 24. Copies of Mr. Hind's circular have been forwarded to the various private observatories throughout the country.

The following letter from Mr. Maclear to Admiral Smyth contains some further intelligence respecting Donati's comet:—

"At page 67 of No. 2, vol. xix. of the Royal Astronomical Society's *Notices*, it is stated that Donati's Comet was first seen at Rio de Janeiro, on October 7; Buenos Ayres, 7; Loando (W. Africa), 7; Cape of Good Hope, 11.

"Omitting Loando, for the geographical reason of that station being some 24 degrees to the north of the Cape, the Comet should have been seen at the other stations about the same date, nearly, weather permitting. I give from our Meteorological Journal the state of the sky at the evening Göttingen mean times of observation, viz. at Cape mean times $5^h\ 34^m$ and $9^h\ 34^m$ P.M.; as follows:—

1858.		$5^h\ 34^m$		$9^h\ 34^m$	
October 7	...	9	...	7	
8	...	9	...	7	Light rain.
9	...	3	...	4	Light rain.
10	...	6	...	3	Light rain.
11	...	1	...	1	

"The number 9 implies that nine-tenths of the visible hemisphere were clouded at the time of observation; 7, that seven-tenths were clouded, &c. &c.; from which the state of the sky between 5^h and 9^h may be inferred.

"It is said to have been seen at Green Point for a few minutes on the 9th, through a break in the clouds.

"On the 10th I saw the head while pointing the telescope, but it was covered by a cloud immediately after; and I remained at the telescope for about an hour, hoping for an opening. The weather cleared up on the 11th.

"The numbers for the 7th and 8th will explain why it could not be seen on those evenings.

"We have pursued it through a considerable segment of the orbit, having hauled off only a fortnight back!

"The number of stars compared with it amount to about 120.

"*Cape of Good Hope*, 1859, *March* 19."

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Sir William Keith Murray has recently forwarded to the Society a printed description of the observatory erected by him a few years ago at Ochtertyre, Perthshire. He has also sent along with this description a set of plans, which serve to give a clear idea of the different parts of the building. It is generally known to astronomers that Sir W. Keith Murray possesses an equatoreally mounted refractor of 9 inches clear aperture, by Messrs. Cooke and Sons of York. Results indicative of the favourable performance of this instrument have been published from time to time in the *Monthly Notices.*

Captain Shea continues to record his observations of the solar spots, and to transmit the results to the Society; he states that his observations now extend over a period of twelve years.

In No. 1182 of the *Astronomische Nachrichten* M. Schwabe has given the following results of his observations of the solar spots in the year 1858:—

Month.	Number of Groups.	Days on which no Spots were seen.	Days of Observation.
January	13	0	24
February	11	0	27
March	13	0	30
April	15	0	30
May	12	0	30
June	15	0	30
July	14	0	29
August	22	0	31
September	20	0	30
October	16	0	30
November	21	0	26
December	16	0	18

Five of the principal groups were visible to the naked eye, namely, those of June 4, August 28, October 16, November 9, and November 29. The group of November 9 had a diameter of 65″·7 — 68″·3. The diameter of the group observed on the 29th of the same month amounted to 205″·8. The greater number of spots appeared in the southern hemisphere. The two most extensive groups were those of March 17 (diameter from east to west 243″·8) and September 30 (diameter 321″·3, also from east to west).

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